

# Class 10 : Motion as Art

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## B. Sculpture in Motion

### 1. Title slide (Bernini and Balanchine)

I originally intended to follow the visual arts in this class with a tour of baroque architecture in Rome, but I had great difficulty obtaining suitable clips. So instead I have been thinking outside the box. Looking at **Bernini** sculptures like the *Rape of Proserpina* or *Apollo and Daphne* shown here, I realized that they were ancestors of the interacting figures in a **ballet pas-de-deux**, so I thought I would spend the second hour on that instead.

### 2. Four choreographers

We are going to look at four short excerpts, each a little under five minutes in length. First, I will show parts of a *pas-de-deux* from *Swan Lake*, in the 1895 reworking by the great genius of Russian ballet, **Marius Petipa** (1819–1910), on which most modern versions are based. Then I shall offer three variations, by the later choreographers shown below, reading from right to left.

### 3. Anatomy of the *Grand Pas-de-Deux*

The classical *pas-de-deux* is actually as formally structured as a Beethoven String Quartet or a duet in a *bel canto* opera. It has five parts: the **entrée** of the two characters, a long **adage** or slow movement in which the man basically supports the woman, much quicker **variations** for him and for her, and a **coda** which brings them together again. The Act III *pas-de-deux* from *Swan Lake* has all these features; I'll show you the *entrée* and the start of the *adage*, but I'll skip the rest of it and the two big *variations* for reasons of time, and pick up with the two brief solos that launch the *coda*—one of them the notorious 32 *fouettés* for the ballerina. There is, however, a twist. This is not a love duet, as would usually be the case. Instead of **Odette**, the White Swan, whom the hero **Siegfried** loves, the villain **Rothbart** has substituted his daughter, **Odile**, the Black Swan, to seduce him. So not only is the dancing pretty spectacular, it is absolutely bristling (on her part) with attitude! The clips actually come from two different performances by the Royal Ballet, with **Zenaida Yanowsky** and **Nehemiah Kish** in the first, and **Marianela Nuñez** and **Vadim Muntagirov** in the second.

### 4. Petipa: *Swan Lake* (1895), Act III pas-de-deux

### 5. George Balanchine

I'll follow that by its virtual antithesis, the first movement of *Sonatine* created in 1975 by **George Balanchine** (1904–83) to the **Ravel** piano piece of the same name. Like many Balanchine works, it has no overt story and the simplest of décor—here made even less formal by having the pianist right there on the stage. But although there is no story, there is very much a relationship between the dancers, and a

close relationship between the dance and the music. The performers are **Megan Fairchild** and **Joaquin de Luz**, with **Elaine Chelton** at the piano.

6. Balanchine: *Sonatine* (1975), first movement
7. Jerome Robbins

We get the handsome **Vadim Muntagirov** again in the next excerpt, which is a scene from *Afternoon of a Faun* by Jerome Robbins (1918–98), a ballet that he created two decades earlier in 1953. The music is by **Debussy**, but Robbins has thrown out all the classical context of the original. Instead, he shows a ballet rehearsal studio, with *barres* on three of the walls and an imaginary wall-sized mirror on the fourth. The male dancer is clearly a narcissist, luxuriating in the beauty of his body. After a minute or so, I'll cut to where the equally narcissistic ballerina (**Sarah Lamb**) first notices that she is not alone. So Robbins is playing with the idea—probably an all-too-frequent occurrence among dancers—of how you choreograph an interaction between two people, when each is only interested in how beautiful they are in themselves!

8. Robbins: *Afternoon of a Faun* (1953), excerpt
9. Wayne McGregor

And from there we go to a *pas-de-deux* by a very different kind of choreographer, **Wayne McGregor** (b.1970), who comes from a contemporary dance background. He uses many of the same kinds of interaction as in a traditional *pas-de-deux*, but they are less confined to a plane (involving more of the Bernini twists, you might say); and they are much, much more physical. The piece is a section from *Chroma* (2006) called *The Hardest Button to Button*; the music is by **Joby Talbot** and **Jack White**, and the dancers (I think) are **Mara Galeazzi** and **Eric Underwood**.

10. McGregor: *Chroma* (2006), “The Hardest Button to Button”
11. Title slide (still from the above)